

Self-Determination in American Painting

Exhibitions by Some Artists Who Think for Themselves

By Royal Cortissoz

This is the moment at which the season of important picture sales really begins. The show just opened at the American Art Galleries is an ambitious affair, but in the very width of its range is impressive. It presents paintings from a number of collections. Arthur B. Emmons contributes a group of works by Monet and Renoir. The estate of the late Thayer M. Adams is represented by early English portraits. The collection left by the late Henry Sayles, of Boston, embraces more English portraits and examples of the Barbizon

and Impressionist schools. Manet, Degas, Monet and their circle figure in the collection of Joseph F. Flanagan. Then there are Barbizon and other modern pictures from the collection of the late Harris B. Dick and after these comes a miscellany from divers sources. All these things are to be sold in the grand ballroom of the Plaza on the evenings of January 14 and 15. From this time on until the spring the auction room will be interesting.

The Test of Artistic Independence

The matter of independence in art has been more in the air this season than at any time in several years. Attention was brought to it in rather aggressive fashion when the American Painters, Sculptors and Gravers made their first exhibition at the Gimpel and Wildenstein gallery in November. This society announced itself as "neither radical nor conservative," but its organization sprang from discontent with the Academy, and its members, whether they individually retain any alliance with the older body or not, have assumed the status of secessionists, men who would substitute ideas of their own for those at the bottom of the existing order of things. Another and larger group, the Society of Independent Artists, has still to come forward this year with its annual exhibition; but what it will be like has already been indicated in the letter from Mr. Walter Pach, which was touched upon in these columns last Sunday. It will be a show assuming to be neither good nor bad, but a kind of clearing house for every kind of contemporary art. Independence, in this case, would appear to have no aesthetic significance whatever, but to be only the slogan of a sort of Barrenism. What does it mean, actually,

independents functioning in a world about the size of a pill box. The critic has sometimes been disparaged as an artist or an author who has failed. Some such idea as this seems to us to be often applicable to the independent. He is often an artist who has failed, an artist who cannot paint, who does not see his subjects in the terms of a craft because he has not mastered that craft, knows nothing about its genius, and so is driven, by stress of his egotism, to babbling in an unformed tongue. American artistic independence when it deviates into fetishism is just a bore.

When American artistic independence is interesting it turns out to be a very simple affair, about which there is nothing to invite metaphysical hair-splitting. It advances no program. It affirms no new process whereby art is to be made over. It consists in nothing more nor less than the disposition of a painter to paint in a way of his own—without violating the artistic decencies. So considered, it appears to be tinged with no revolutionary hue. Weir was an independent. He exhibited with the American Painters, Sculptors and Gravers. But there never was anything fantastic about Weir's work. He knew and respected his craft: The test of his work was simply a question as to whether he had anything of his own to say or not. He emerged successfully from the ordeal because he remained an artist in what he had to say and in his way of saying it. There, as it seems to us, lies the core of the problem. Does an artist match his ideas with his execution? Is the individuality of his point of view well served by his technique? The mistake that is often made is in the assumption that a strongly personal point of view by itself must win the day. To maintain that error is to winnow the wind. The end of art is beauty. If an artist has not achieved that, he and his acolytes may talk forever about "what he is trying for," but the disinterested observer will stay unmoved. He wants independence that gets somewhere, not arrogant forays up blind alleys. There is everything



SUMMER TIME
(From the painting by Albert Sterner)

erman masterfully hinted in a few swift stenographic touches, are all bound together in a pictorial unit which makes us at once joyfully at one with the scene. Truth like this is worth while. There is more of it in the exhibition. Mr. Lukas spills his broad, vigorous notes like so many anecdotes of a fishing trip in which he has taken immense delight. And yet we find something ambiguous about his veracity.

What troubles us is that we would like to see the fisherman more persuasively doubled with the artist. It is a good thing to see the facts so powerfully stated. But was it impossible, was it undesirable, to endue them with charm, the charm that flows from pigment sensitively handled? Mr. Lukas paints by main strength. Look at his two or three portraits of children. In one of them, the quaint "Lollipops," there are some tones which suggest an unwanted suavity. But in general he paints a child as he might paint a coal heaver, as he actually paints the trapper, "Pat Lacey," with a stroke that hints not so much of a hand as it does of a fist. And the impact, on canvas, is not alone brutal—it is ugly. Hals had the strength of a triphammer. But he wielded it with an incredible delicacy. Mr. Lukas allows his indifference to the charm of paint to infect his view of nature. This is not always faithful to the fact. Some of his rocks look like meaningless chunks of lead. His independence has the virtue of sincerity, and it is supported by genuine talent. But not all his stone-breaking virtuosity can conceal the fact that the instinct for beauty has been left out of his cosmos.

before Mr. Miller's best figure work, before such a nude as the "Fantasie of the Antique," one would not have his characteristic scheme changed by so much as a flicker of our latter-day impressionism. One hopes then to be sure that he may continue indefinitely in his remote, sequestered path, working a spell that begins by making us think of George Frederick Watts, but ends by convincing us that it is a spell of his own, absolutely. The instinct for beauty has not been left out of his cosmos. On the contrary, it is the wellspring of his art. In poetry, said Matthew Arnold, the illusion is everything. So it is in art, for Mr. Miller. In technique he sometimes is at a loss. In pure charm he is almost unfailing.

Charm is not precisely the element for which we have been prepared in the work of Mr. Bellows. Like Mr. Lukas, he often conveys the impression of a man painting by main strength. But this time he has surpassed himself. He is his old, familiar and clever self in the single portrait he shows, the engaging "Margaret." In the landscapes and coast scenes which form the bulk of his contribution he is new and strange and altogether delightful. Has the size of an artist's canvas any influence upon the quality of his work? These pictures, painted on a smaller scale than any we have associated with his productions, have an intimate quality that he has hitherto left unrevealed. It is an intimacy of mind, of emotion, that is here established. It is so winning, so full of the attractiveness of nature—and of an original point of view—that we make nothing of certain oddities, like the drawing of Mr. Bellows's cattle. His cows are own sisters to Behemoth, but they fit enchantingly into these enchanting studies. Sometimes, as in "The Black Bull," the transcript of fact is as accurate as the artistic envelope is lovely. But chiefly we think of the singularity of his vision, of the unconventional utterance to which he has been stirred, of the exhilarating freshness with which he has set forth his impressions of landscapes near the sea. The robust and sometimes heavy-handed technique which has occasionally got between us and the substance of his work is in this instance somewhat adjusted, subdued, to the more spiritual nature of that which he has to say. His independence is not asserted for the sake of a tour-de-force in brushwork. It leaves him a sensitive artist, an artist sensitive to beauty.

Mr. Sterner's plea is in this exhibition for the beauty that resides in technique pure and simple. He is varied in theme. He paints the nude, he makes studies for portraits, he is decorative. But it is not his purpose in any of these works to proclaim a reconceivable idea. It is rather to express grace of form through distinction of line and skill in modeling, with an occasional excursion into a kind of gay bravura, as in the clever "Fancy Dress." There are examples in which he aims at pictorial charm and secures it. The "Summertime" is a conspicuous illustration of his adroitness in composition. As an allegory it has no great depth. As a study of the nude, based upon knowledge both of form and of design, it preserves all the solid merits of the academic hypothesis and adds to them a personal accent. It is a pity that Mr. Sterner has not brought into his exhibit any of those imaginative motives which he has disclosed from time to time in his lithographs. He, too, has been in Arcadia, but this time he forgets to dream—his work is mundane, sophisticated, as though the thing he were doing counted not half so much as his way of doing it. Fortunately, it is an interesting way, as sound as it is spirited. In the clean-cut definition of form, in the sure-footed pursuit of the nuances of draftsmanship, he gives us, like his comrades, a genuine sensation.

Kramer, Lawson And Some Others

Mr. Edward Adam Kramer, an exhibition of whose work has been arranged at the Anderson Galleries through the intervention of a group of friends, well deserves the tribute thus paid to him. He reminds us of the singers who persist in the anthologies through the magic of a single song. His range, as a few of his pictures suggest, is not necessarily limited, but so far as choice goes he would appear to be the devotee of a single effect. It is an effect based upon a grove of slender saplings and then built up out of the artist's inner vision into the semblance of that softly shimmering fusion of tints which we find in a milky opal. So enamored is he of this tenderly refined motive, this diaphanous fabric of color, this faint, exquisite key, that he very nearly declines upon anti-climax. The friends who have done so much for him have done, perhaps, a little too much. A whole repeat of rose leaves is a trifle wanting in refreshment. It grows monotonous. One would like to recognize in Mr. Kramer the master of a style. Instead of that he seems almost the victim of a manner. And yet, as we have indicated, there are signs that he does not need to be anything of the sort.

There is a landscape in low tones, the "Requiem," which gets out of wind-blown trees something of the dramatic quality which Homer Martin achieved in his famous picture of "The Sun Worshippers." In the small painting, called for no very obvious reason "Aspiration," a study of tree trunks against rocks, there is a solidity of color and there is a touch of power which makes us think of Courbet. From this strong piece of work we infer that Mr. Kramer has some remarkable potentialities. Consciously or unconsciously he holds them in reserve when he paints his more characteristic pieces. His three forms are slightly, even feebly, defined; his scenes are put together seemingly at haphazard, rather than with feeling for design; his canvases are dappled with color instead of being composed, where we are certain, all the time, that he could put forth a more constructive energy if it suited him to do so. We sigh for a little more form in his art. But that is possibly to ask him to be another type of artist, and he is indubitably beguiling first as himself. There is a delicate loveliness in his frail, concentrated sweetness. A picture of his should be pleasant to live with. This show should advance his reputation, and perhaps another one would clinch the matter. This further exhibition which we venture to suggest would be one of not more than twenty or thirty paintings. Without the present overcrowding his art would be seen in a better perspective.

At the Daniel Gallery there is a group of four paintings belonging to the more progressive ranks. Mr. Ernest Lawson takes the lead by virtue of his "Birch Woods," a study fairly brimming over with sylvan beauty. His impressionism is not obtruded, as a method. It seems but the servant of a pictorial ideal, the means to an end. One admires his skill, but one is touched wholly by the fine landscape sentiment with which the canvas is charged. Mr. Robert Henri is all for technical virtuosity and the world well lost. The shoulders and arms of the dark-haired model in his "Hawaii and Navaho" are masterfully painted. Every once in so often Mr. Henri impresses us as an artist born to exhibit in the Salon, to distinguish himself in purely technical exercises. His four canvases in this exhibition are portraits of exotic types, and, as such, possess a certain interest, but their value is that of a kind of scholastic brilliance in execution. Mr. Maurice Prendergast, with his decorative schemes of figures in the open air that somehow give the effect of samplers, and Mr. W. J. Glackens, working more than ever in the vein of Renoir, complete the group. It is a lively, agreeable show.

Busts and Reliefs by James Earle Fraser

With many of the sculptures by Mr. James Earle Fraser which are on view at the Arden gallery the public has long been familiar. But it was a good idea to bring the collection together, for in its fullness and weight it gives us a new idea of the distinction of his art. Mr. Fraser occupies a position all his own among the younger sculptors

EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS BY
**WILLIAM LATHROP
ELMER SCHOFIELD**
UNTIL JANUARY 17th
The Ferargil Galleries
607 Fifth Avenue, at Forty-ninth Street

Established 1879. Tel. 6739 Bryant
CALO ART GALLERIES
107 W. 46th St., near 6th Ave.
Now on view a fine collection of
FOREIGN AND AMERICAN PAINTINGS
Your inspection is cordially invited.

ELMORE STUDIOS
Antiques and Reproductions, Marble, Terra Cotta and Gesso
GARDEN FURNITURE
Brass, Pewter & Wrought Iron—Japanese Prints
3-5 West 28th Street, N.Y.
Tel. 2185 Madison Square

EXHIBITIONS & SALES AT THE ANDERSON GALLERIES

PARK AVENUE & 59TH STREET, NEW YORK

EXHIBITIONS OPEN WEEK-DAYS 9-6, SUNDAYS 1-5 P. M.

AN IMPORTANT AND BEAUTIFUL COLLECTION

JAPANESE COLOR PRINTS

INCLUDING MANY EXTRAORDINARY PRINTS FROM AN OLD SAMURAI FAMILY IN TOKIO

BROUGHT TOGETHER BY THE WELL-KNOWN CONNOISSEUR

BUNKIO MATSUKI

To be sold Monday and Tuesday evenings, January 19 and 20 at 8:15.

SALES CONDUCTED BY MR. FREDERICK A. CHAPMAN

JOHN LEVY Galleries

PAINTINGS

By

Frederic Remington

Now on Exhibition

559 Fifth Avenue

KLEINBERGER GALLERIES

Established 1848

OLD MASTERS

and

PRIMITIVE PAINTINGS

Frequent importations of desirable pictures for the collector and the home
725 Fifth Avenue
Paris: 9 rue de l'Echelle

EXHIBITION

GLACKENS
HENRI
LAWSON
PRENDERGAST

DANIEL GALLERY

2 WEST 47TH STREET

Howard Young GALLERIES

PAINTINGS

by

A.G. WARSHAWSKY

Now On Exhibition

620 Fifth Avenue, at 56th St.

DUDENSING Galleries

PAINTINGS BY

GEORGE INNESS A.H. WYANT
R.A. BLAKELOCK
J. FRANCIS MURPHY
and other distinguished artists
45 West 44th St. Between Fifth and Sixth Aves.

DELMONICO'S ART GALLERY

FIFTH AVENUE AT 46TH ST.

EXHIBITION OF WESTERN PAINTINGS

By W. E. ROLLINS

Open Daily and Sunday
10 A. M. to 9 P. M.
UNTIL FEBRUARY 1ST

TOUCHSTONE GALLERIES

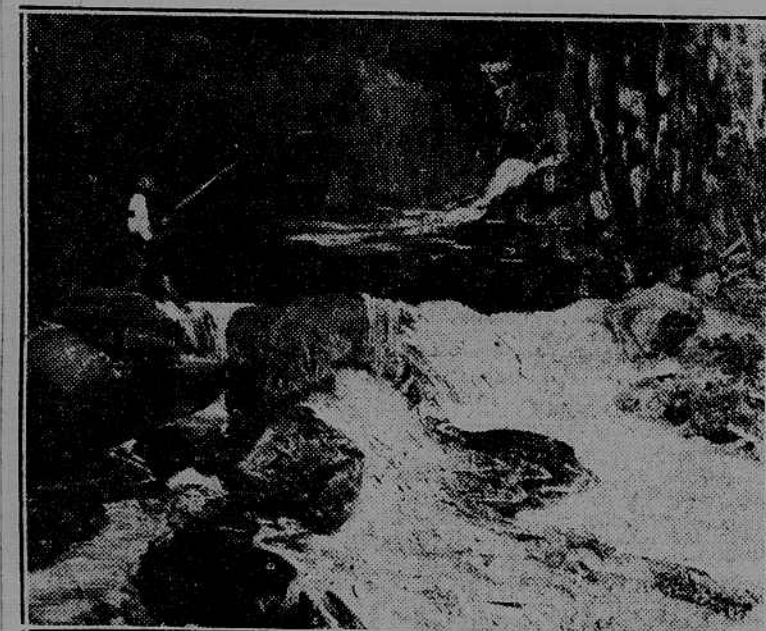
Exhibition of PAINTINGS

H. E. Schanzenberg Adelaide Lawson
Richard Marwede Stewart Criss
David Morrison Alice Newton
and others
January 12 to January 25
11 West Forty-Seventh Street

KARASZ BATIK EXHIBIT

ACADEMY ART SHOP

153 West 57th Street



SALMON FISHING ON THE MEDWAY
(From the painting by George Lukas)

in American painting? The question comes up again and again, and it is always stimulating.

On the whole, independence, with us, would appear to be what it has often been before in other times and places—for a few men an authentic impulse, for others a catchword. Abstractly considered, it can never mean, with safety, too rigidly defined a program. A program usually is a fetish, and, like all fetishes, it betrays its followers, just as those men are betrayed who mistake a superstition for a faith. The independence that leads an artist to enroll himself under the banner of an "ism" lands him in subjection to a rule more drastic than that imposed by any Academy. Witness the futile distortions of the Cubist or the Futurist. He dares not trust himself to the inspiration of so various a guide as nature. Nay, he must confine anything he has to say about nature within the narrow boundaries of an arbitrary artistic (?) hypothesis. In the upshot we find a great many so-called

in self-determination. There is nothing in mere self-assertion.

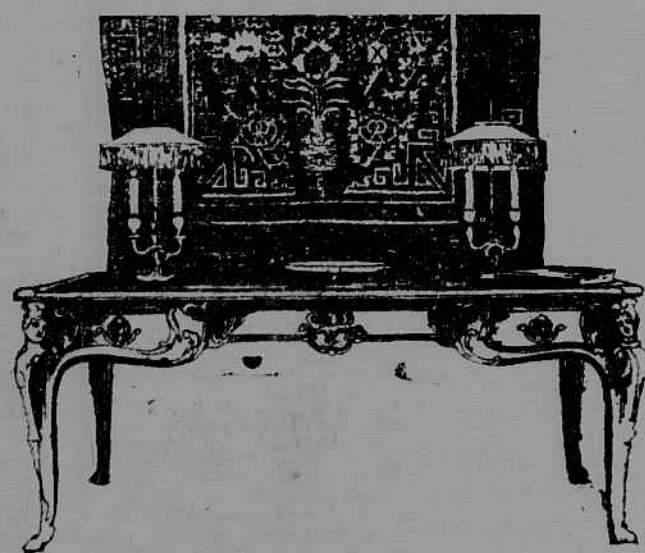
A Type of Ambiguous Veracity

There are some pictures by Mr. George Lukas at the Kraushaar gallery. He is a perfect representative of a certain kind of artistic independence. He paints, we should say, to please himself, and there is no mistaking the fact that he understands his craft—so far as he goes. We see him, too, as a man with an unaffected feeling for nature, responsive to the appeal she makes in her rougher, cruder moods. These pictures are mostly souvenirs of Nova Scotia trout streams, a world of tumbling waters, keen winds and a sportsman's active life. There is zest in the subject and there is zest in Mr. Lukas's impression of it. For sheer gusto it would be hard to beat the "Salmon Fishing on the Medway River." The still pool and the swirling falls above and below it, the eager fish-

The Unity of Three Differing Artists

It is an uncommonly good exhibition that is current at the Knoedler gallery, one composed of paintings by George Bellows, Hayes Miller and Albert Sterner. They all speak different idioms and they are united in the right kind of independence. Mr. Miller is the leading exemplar of that beauty on which, in season and out of season, we would always lay stress. He is the very antithesis of Mr. Lukas. He would not splash paint around if he could. His method is, indeed, so subtle, his mode of approach is so delicate, that he falls upon something like mannerism. Nature as he studies her is clothed in but one garment of tone, which he reproduces in soft greys and greens that very nearly become cloying. One rejoices in his quiet key when it gives us a landscape like the lovely "Sand Pit." But too frequently his atmosphere seems fixed by some habit of the studio, and one wishes he would go out of doors. On the other hand,

ANTIQUES



Distinctive Furniture Rugs Fabrics
Screens Interior Decoration

David G. Flynn

5 East 53rd Street Phone 414 Plaza

Clarke's

5 West 44th St.

Attractive Sale

of

SPANISH ANTIQUES

the collection of

Montllor Brothers

of New York and Barcelona

removed from the Spanish Galleries, 514 Madison Ave., in consequence of the expiration of their lease.

The collection includes

Fine Refectory Tables, Cabinets, Chairs, Wedding Chests, Benches, Beds, Wood Carvings, Fabrics, Wrought Iron Potteries, Sculptures and Paintings.

Also a Large and Important

Hispano-Moresque Door

The Exhibition opens Monday, January 19th, at 2:00 P. M. Sales by Auction on Thursday, January 22nd, and following days at 2:30 P. M.

Owing to the exceptional opportunities which Montllor Brothers have embraced for the direct acquisition of authentic Spanish Art, the present sale should prove to be of unusual interest.

The Sale will be conducted by MR. AUGUSTUS W. CLARKE

WANTED To Purchase Paintings

by

Inness Wyant Martin Homer Fuller Blakelock Twachtman Remington Whistler

Murphy, Weir, Hassam

AINSLIE GALLERIES

Established 1885 by

GEORGE H. AINSLIE

615 Fifth Avenue, New York

Phone Plaza 6886

Now on Exhibition

30 Paintings by Inness

LAST WEEK of Exhibition

Water Colors

by

MARIE STILLMAN

(Mrs. W. J.)

Representing OLD ENGLISH MANOR Houses and Gardens and other objects 10 A. M. to 5 P. M.

The Willow Brook Co.

Interior Decorators

9 West Forty-seventh Street, N. Y.

SPECIAL EXHIBITION of Water Color Paintings

by

Mlle. Germaine Tailleux

of France.

January 12 to 29, inclusive.

ARLINGTON GALLERIES

274 Madison Ave., at 40th St.

JAPAN ART STUDIO

Decorative Oriental Antiques, Fine Lacquer Work

General Art Repairing of Jade, Porcelain, Pottery, Ivory, Kimonos, etc.

Mezzotints, Etchings, Engravings, Paintings, Water Colors, Lamps, Mirrors, Frames, Restoring, Regilding, Framing

A specialty

Beljord Galleries

556 AMSTERDAM AVE. (Cor. 87th St.)

to the "Beljord"

METROPOLITAN GALLERIES

High Class

Old and Modern Paintings

BOUGHT

AND FOR SALE

648 MADISON AVENUE, N. Y.

Telephone Plaza 8766

REISS ART SCHOOL

4 Christopher Street, near Ninth Avenue and 14th Street. Telephone Spring 6772

DAY AND EVENING CLASSES

Life: Sketching: Textile: Batik: Poster

KASIMIR EUROPEAN ETCHINGS ACADEMY ART SHOP

153 West 57th St.